

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
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Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
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Vol. 84

Wednesday, May 4, 2005

No. 9



From Your Commissioner...

Read Fine Print on Today's Pressure-Treated Lumber

Peepers singing in the swamps, folks fixing fences, meadows greening up—time for random notes from all over.....

—Pressure treated lumber has revolutionized the construction of agricultural buildings over the past 30 years or so, allowing support posts and poles to be set in the ground, thus avoiding the cost of foundations.

Treatment technologies evolved in recent years away from creosote-and-diesel oil formulations to more sophisticated chemistry that made treated wood products easier to handle and more consumer friendly.

But concerns about environmental risks posed by the most popular method of wood treatment, CCA, led EPA to ban it from the marketplace and left builders to deal with higher costs resulting from new treatment methods and the highly corrosive effects of the new chemicals on nails, joist hangers and other metal fasteners.

Dick Pitman, Chichester-based barn builder, says buyers of pressure treated lumber now need to read the fine print on the labels that come with every stick of treated lumber to know whether the wood is suitable for in-ground or above-ground-only applications. And they'll want to use only hardware that can stand up to the corrosive effects of the new treatment chemicals, and that means stainless steel, he adds.

—Legislation getting close to final passage at the State House will raise the gross vehicle weight limits for trucks traveling on Interstates 89, 93 and 95 to 99,000 pounds, up from 80,000. A change in federal law allows for the change, and brings New Hampshire's interstate highway weight limit in line with that on other state roads.

Haulers of milk, logs and lumber have long chafed at the two-tiered GVW, with many choosing to use side roads rather than risk big fines for being overweight on the superhighways.

—Gardening not only produces fresh food for the table, it's good for your physical health. UNH Cooperative Extension's Margaret Hagen notes that a half hour of common yard and garden work can burn off a lot of calories.

Here's her breakdown of the caloric value of 30 minutes at these tasks: raking, 162; weeding, 182; mowing with a push mower, 182; digging or tilling, 202; and planting seedlings, 162. Hagen says you don't have to do the work in a solid stretch—the work can be spread off and on over the whole day and you get the same benefit.

—NHDAMF's Division of Plant Industry has published a "Guide to Invasive Upland Plant Species in New Hampshire" to help landowners, landscapers, gardeners and the general public identify the 21 terrestrial and four aquatic plants on the state Prohibited Invasive Plant Species list.

The booklet is in full color, with photographs of full-size plants plus close-ups of leaves and blossoms of each species accompanied by text describing characteristics, habitat, means of spread and recommended control measures. It also contains information about the state Invasive Species Act.

An initial printing of 5,000 copies will be distributed through Cooperative Extension locations, nurseries, garden centers, feed stores and conservation groups. It was published with support from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. To obtain a copy by mail call 271-3551.

—A few weeks back I mentioned comments by former Red Sox pitcher Bill Lee about round bales and self-storage facilities being the bane of the rural landscape for the way they diminish use of old barns and sheds.

John Harrigan, the renowned Colebrook-based writer, farmer and raconteur, agrees with Lee to a point. But round bales are also "great emancipators" in his view, as anyone who ever pitched loose hay in the blazing sun will be sure to agree.

Round bales have been the salvation of many smaller New Hampshire farms, both on the haymaking side and the feeding end, speeding up the harvest and cutting down on labor requirements. Used to be young teenagers would come around looking to make a little money bucking square bales, but not today, as they're probably off at a soccer camp or sitting around playing video games.

Steve Taylor, Commissioner